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A
SERMON

Preached to the
SOCIETIES
FOR
Reformation of Manners,

AT
St. Mary-le-Bow,

ON
Monday *January* the 16th, 1726.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
Greene
THOMAS, Lord Bishop of ELY. K

LONDON:

Printed and Sold by JOSEPH DOWNING, in
Bartholomew-Close, near *West-Smithfield*,
M.DCC.XXVII.

MEMORIAL

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EPHES. V. II.

And have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them.



ST. Paul having Converted the *Ephe-
sians* to the Christian Faith, and
thereby brought them from that
dark and sad State of Ignorance,
and Sin, and Wickedness, wherein
they had lived while they were Heathens, was
greatly desirous that they should now leave
all their old vicious Habits, and lead their
Lives suitable to that Holy Religion, to the
Knowledge of which they had been called, *by
the abundant Mercy and Compassion of God
towards them*, Chap. ii. at the Beginning.
As very well knowing, that unless they did so,
their Conversion to Christianity would be of
little Stead to them, they might e'en as well
have continued Heathens still.

WHEREFORE, being now a Prisoner at
Rome, and so not able to come to them in
Person, he sends this Epistle to them by *Ty-
chicus*, wherein he earnestly *beseeches them*,
that they would walk worthy of that holy

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Vocation wherewith they were called, Chap. iv. 1. And particularly in this Chapter, whereof my Text is a part, charges them, that those impure and abominable Practices, in which they had formerly lived, *be not now so much as once named*, or heard of any more *amongst them*, v. 3, 4. In their dark and Heathen State, it was indeed no Wonder that they were guilty of them, *but now they are Light in the Lord*, and therefore ought to walk *as Children of Light*, v. 8. Being now enlightened by the Christian Religion, they ought by no Means to live any longer like Heathens, in the Practice of *the Works of Darknes*; but to let all Moral and Divine Vertues, that is, an universal Righteousness, shine in their Conversation, as Things most agreeable to the Divine Will, and by the habitual Practice whereof alone they could approve themselves unto God. *For the Fruit of the Spirit*, says he, v. 9. *is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth*. These are the genuine Fruits of the Holy Spirit of God, by which you are now enlightned, and which you ought to bring forth, and make appear in the Sight of all Men, *that they seeing your Good Works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven*.

BUT then, knowing moreover, how dangerous it is for those who are convinc'd of their Duty, and do design to live in Obedience to it, to converse in a wicked World, where they would often meet with Temptations from others, to be Partakers with them in their wicked Practices; he proceeds further in the Verse of my Text, to guard them against the evil

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evil Influence of others, by advising them to *have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness*, nor the Workers of them, *but rather* to shew their Abhorrence of them by *reproving* them.

BEFORE I proceed to discourse further on these Words, give me leave here to observe, that what the Apostle says to the *Ephesians*, he says to *Us* also, and to all other Christians whatsoever; who, from our Profession of Christianity, are all under the same Obligations to Holiness of Life our selves, and to promote it in others also, to the utmost of our Power. *Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them.*

IN this Advice of the Apostle are Two Parts, Both intending the same Thing, the Discountenancing and Discouraging of Vice, though express'd in a different Manner.

THE First *Negatively*, *Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness*. Be not Partakers with other Men in them, shew no Approbation of them, by consenting to them, or conniving at them, or pleading in the Behalf of them, or especially by joyning with them in the sinful Practice of them.

THE Second *Positively*, *but rather reprove them*. Discountenance them as much as you can, by plainly, but prudently, declaring against them; discredit and shame them by your own excellent Example to the contrary; check and hinder them, as much as is in your Power, by your Authority; or if that will not do, endeavour to bring those, who are notoriously guilty of them, to a due Punishment for them.

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FROM this Explication of the Words, we see, that Both of them do aim at the same Thing; and therefore I shall joyn the Consideration of them Both together: And then the Proposition, which I would crave Leave to draw from them, and entertain this present Audience with, is This:

THAT to reprove, discountenance, and discourage Vice, is a Work very worthy of all Good Men to be employed in.

Now the Method which I shall observe in discoursing thereupon, shall be This.

First, I will produce some Reasons for the Proof of it.

Secondly, I shall hint at some of those Ways which seem most conducive to the effecting of so good a Work.

Thirdly, I shall conclude with an Exhortation to those worthy Persons, who are at present engaged in this excellent Work.

First, I shall produce some Reasons for the Proof of my Proposition, That to reprove, discountenance, and discourage Vice, is a Work very worthy of all good Men to be employ'd in.

AND the First Reason I shall produce for it, shall be drawn from the Evil Character, which the Apostle, here in my Text, gives of all Sinful Practices: *First*, he calls them *Works of Darkeness*, and *Secondly*, *Unfruitful Works*.

First, HE calls them *Works of Darkeness*. Under this Character, all manner of Sinful and Wicked Practices, are frequently set out to us in the Holy Scriptures, for which several Reasons

sons may be assigned. As first, *Darkness* is a Thing very ungrateful and uncomfortable to Mankind; they that walk therein are exposed to many and great Mischiefs, which the Benefit of Light frees them from the Danger of; and therefore the Spirit of God has fix'd this Character, of *Works of Darkness*, upon all wicked Practices, to make them more odious to us. Hence, *Prov. iv. 19.* it is said, *The Way of the Wicked is as Darkness, they know not at what they stumble.* Then again, they are called *Works of Darkness*, in Opposition to Works of Piety and Holiness, which are in Scripture called *Light*; so our Saviour advises, *Let your Light*, that is, *your Good Works*, *shine before Men*, *Matt. v. 16.* So also says *St. Paul*, *Rom. xiii. 12.* *Let us cast off the Works of Darkness*, all evil Deeds, *and put on the Armour of Light*, that is, *walk soberly, righteously, and godly*, being cloathed with all Christian Vertues and Graces, which are called *the Armour of Light*; and good Men are called *the Children of Light*, *Luke xvi. 8.* Then again, the Vileness and Scandalousness of Sinful Practices, do usually make those who are guilty of them, to avoid the Light, and to seek for Privacy and Darkness to commit them in. The Light would shame them, and put them into Confusion. Hence says *St. John*, *Ch. iii. 19.* *Men love Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are Evil.* Then again, as they proceed from the Temptations of Satan, *the Prince of Darkness*; who by his cunning Delusions, Wiles, and Stratagems, is continually casting Mists before the Eyes of Sin-

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Sinners, and blinding their Understandings, that they may not see their Folly, nor perceive their Danger, that he may the more easily hurry them headlong into the Pit of Destruction. And, lastly, Sinful and wicked Practices, are justly called *Works of Darknes*, inasmuch as they do ultimately tend to *Eternal Darknes*, by the just Judgment of God upon those, who have been guilty of them, and have not heartily repented of them.

Secondly, As a further Addition to the Badness of their Character, they are called *unfruitful Works of Darknes*. The Word in the Original is ἀκαρπὶς, which does indeed signify unfruitful; but then in this Place, something more is generally thought to be intended by it, *viz.* that *the Works of Darknes* are unprofitable, (as all unfruitful Things are) pernicious and destructive to all those that practise them. It being a Figure used in many Places of Scripture, where something more is intended than is express'd; as *Rom. i. 28.* where it is said, that *God gave up the Heathen, who liked not to retain him in their Knowledge, to do those Things which are not convenient*; not barely unseemly, but such as are very gross, abominable, and scandalous, and hurtful. So here, when *the Works of Darknes* are called *unfruitful Works*, the Apostle does thereby intend to signify to us, the exceeding mischievous Nature of them. They do indeed produce Fruits, but such as bring no Profit, nor yield any Comfort and Satisfaction to them that enjoy them. *What Fruit*, says the same Apostle to the *Romans*, now Converted to the Chri-

Christian Faith. *had ye in those Things*, those abominable Iniquities, committed in your Unconverted State, *whereof ye are now ashamed?* Rom. vi. 21. *for the End of those Things is Death.*

MEN are apt to propose to themselves great Pleasure or Profit by their Sins, which makes them so eager on the Commission of them; but alas! they find all their Expectations from them miserably deluded and disappointed at last. This is elegantly express'd in the Book of *Wisdom*, Chap. v. 14. *The Hope of the Ungodly*, i. e. the Expectation they conceive of Profit from their evil Works, *is like Dust that is blown away with the Wind, like a thin Froth that is driven away with the Storm*, it is easily dispers'd, and is no where to be found afterwards. There is no solid Benefit, no real lasting Profit to be got by them. Those Sins, which are thought to be most advantagious, when all Accounts are cast up, appear at last to be quite otherwise. Many uneasy Thoughts do usually attend the Contrivance for them, Fear of Discovery, Shame and Confusion do follow them. They are a Dishonour to our Natures, as we are Reasonable Beings, and a Reproach to our Understanding, and therefore must needs sit very untowardly and uneasily on the Minds of those who give themselves up to the Practice of them. They cannot reflect upon them with any Satisfaction afterwards, when they consider, as their abused Consciences will force them to do sometimes, that

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they render them *odious to a Holy God, infamous to others, and loathsome to themselves.* And if they consider the Consequences of them, the dismal Punishment threaten'd to them in another World, which they cannot for their Lives but be sadly afraid of sometimes, when Sickness seizes them, or Death approaches; how confounding then are the Thoughts of them! when they do not know, but have great Reason to fear, that they will end in eternal Darkness, in Despair and Misery for ever and ever; and would then give all the World for the least Glimpse of Hope that they will not do so.

FOOLISH Sinners and unwise! that can be content to leave the plain and pleasant Paths of Righteousness, that lead to everlasting Light and Joy, to follow the Guidance of *the Prince of Darkness*, whose greatest Delight it is, to tempt them into the intricate and obscure Ways of Sin, that he may lead them blindfold into eternal Ruine! That can be willing to forsake God, their best Friend, *whose Service is perfect Freedom*, to be the Drudges and Slaves of their greatest Enemy the Devil, whose only Aim and Endeavour it is, to make all those miserable for ever, who will be subject unto him! That can be persuaded to venture the Loss of all the unspeakable endless Felicities and Glories of the other World, for the Sake of enjoying the vain, short, unprofitable, sinful Pleasures of this World!

Now

Now since all Vicious Practices are thought by the Apostle to deserve no better a Character, than to be styled the *unfruitful Works of Darknefs*, the Works by which Satan, who is the *Prince of Darknefs*, supports his Empire in the World, in Opposition to the Kingdom of God, which is a Kingdom of Holiness and Righteousness, and does thereby do vast Mischief to the Souls of Men, those precious, invaluable, and immortal Souls, for which Christ died; and for the Destruction of which Works, the Eternal Son of God was manifested; to discover, prevent, discountenance, and discourage These, must needs be a Work very worthy of all good Men to be employed in. They hereby have the Honour of being, *in some Sort*, Workers with Christ, in the same glorious Work, which He came down from Heaven to set forward, *viz.* the beating down and destroying that Power, which the Devil had usurped over Mankind. They hereby do help to exalt the Kingdom of God and his Christ in the World, and to further the Salvation of many Souls, which, by the Practice of the *unfruitful Works of Darknefs*, would be in Danger of being irrecoverably lost and undone for ever.

Secondly, God is greatly dishonoured in the World, by these *unfruitful Works of Darknefs*; and therefore to prevent, discountenance, and discourage them, must needs be a Work worthy of all good Men to be employed in. There is nothing certainly would so much promote the Honour and Glory of God in the

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World, as a General Practice of true and sincere Piety and Goodness therein. The blessed Effects, which all Mankind would receive from it, in their *single*, and in their *social* Capacities, could not fail but to open the Mouths of all Men in Praises and Thanksgivings to that gracious Being, who had given such excellent Dispositions unto Men, whereby the Goodness and Happiness of every one would be so greatly promoted.

The Prospect of that happy State, which the blessed Angels knew was design'd to be promoted by the Coming of the Son of God into the World, did so transport those glorious Spirits, that a great Number of them joyned, with the Angel that came to give Notice of his Birth, in Rejoycing and Singing Praises unto God, saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will towards Men.* And when this blessed State, thus design'd, shall more fully take Place in the World, of which there are many glorious Things said in the Word of God, and we hope are not far from having their Completion, though the Appearances of Things at present are not very favourable to it; then will more plainly be made appear to all Mankind, how conducive to their Happiness the sincere Practice of Piety and Vertue, by all Degrees and Ranks of Men, will be: When they shall see and feel, by daily Experience, what a blessed Change, a true Spirit of Religion, settled in the Hearts of Men, and exerted in all the beneficent Exercises of it, shall have
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made in the World. And then, how will the Name of God be glorified in the World, and his Praises continually celebrated by those, who shall be so happy as to see and feel themselves encompass'd with such Blessings on every Side? How should the Consideration of that happy State, which the World will then be in, make all good Men fervent in their Prayers to God, that *he would hasten it in his Time?*

BUT, in the mean Time, till it shall please God, by his all-wise and good Providence, to bring about that happy Change in the World, They, who in a perverse and crooked Generation, do use their best Endeavours to put a Stop to the spreading Infection of *Atheism*; *Prophaneness* and *Irreligion*, of *Fallhood*, *Fraud*, *Injustice*, *Intemperance*, and *abominable Uncleanness*, those *Works of Darkness*, those Scandals to all Religion, whereby God's Holy Name is greatly dishonoured, his most righteous Laws set at naught and despised, and the Design of our Blessed Saviour, in Coming into the World, as much as lays in the Power of wicked Men, is subverted and defeated; They, who by all the prudent Methods that a due Sense of the Honour of God, and a zealous Concern for the Good of Souls, can suggest, do labour to reform and amend a Wicked World, and to bring true Christian Piety and Vertue into Reputation and Practice again, which have been so long treated with Scorn and Contempt; They, I say, who are engaged in a Work, so acceptable to God,
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and so beneficial to Men, are certainly engaged in a Work very worthy of all good Men to be employed in. All who have a Regard for the Honour of God, must love, esteem, and value them, and wish them Success therein; and they may likewise assure themselves, that God will greatly reward them for it hereafter.

Thirdly, The Practice of these *unfruitful Works of Darkness*, does greatly endanger the bringing down God's *Judgments* upon those Nations who are guilty of it; and therefore to prevent, discountenance, discourage and reprove it, must needs be a Work worthy of all Good Men to be employ'd in. Though God be *Gracious and Merciful, Long-suffering, and of great Goodness, and does not afflict willingly*, but delights to *exercise Loving-kindness in the Earth*; yet when wicked Men have long abused his Patience, to the Encrease of their Sins; when his Goodness, that should have led them to Repentance for them, has still harden'd them more and more in them; when the *crying* Sins of a Nation are come to the Height, when their Iniquities are *full and ripe* for Judgment, then is God wont to proceed to Punish them, and that so much the more severely, the longer their Punishment has been delayed. He makes them smart once at last for all their Sins, that have been heaped up during the whole Time of his Patience towards them. This he has over and over declared in Scripture shall be his Method of Dealing with obsti-

obstinate and incorrigible Sinners, and thus has he proceeded accordingly.

OF this, the Old World is a sad Instance ; which growing worse and worse under his long Forbearance, he was at last provoked to destroy it with an *Universal Deluge*. For the same Reason, the abominable filthy Inhabitants of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and *the Cities about them*, when they were grown so universally wicked, that *Ten righteous Persons* could not be found in them, to turn away the Anger of God, that he might not destroy them, then were they overthrown in a most dreadful Manner by *Fire and Brimstone from Heaven*, and are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire, Jude vii. Of this, his own chosen, and once beloved People, the *Jews*, are a standing Memorial. God bore with their Iniquities a long Time, calling them often and often by his Prophets to Repentance and Amendment of their evil Doings ; but when all his Mercies were thrown away upon them ; when no Warnings, no Entreaties could reclaim them, but they would go on to add Sin unto Sin, till they had *filled up the Measure of their Iniquities*, then did God pour forth his Fury upon them, and punish them in such a Manner, as never any Nation in the World before was punished ; and they are the lasting Monuments of his Vengeance to this very Day.

AFTER the like Manner, many have been, and still will be, the Judgments of God upon the Workers of Iniquity, upon such as take
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Delight in *the unfruitful Works of Darknes* to do them, and will not, by all God's Dispen-
sations of Mercy, Patience, and Forbearance
towards them, be prevailed with to reform
and amend their evil Doings. God is never
at Peace with the Ungodly and Prophane ;
He is angry with the Wicked every Day,
Psal. vii. 11. And his Judgments are always
ready to be poured out upon them, when he
sees a fit Time and Occasion for it, though
he may for a while defer the Execution of
them. He has always at Hand *Plagues, Fa-
mine, and Pestilence, Storms and Tempests*, and
other Instruments of his Fury, to be the Exe-
cutioners of his Wrath upon a sinful and
unrepenting People ; and therefore they can
never be secure, but that he may in a Mo-
ment, when they least think of them, send
them forth upon them.

How should these Things put *Us*, of this
Nation, in Mind of what we have deserved
from the Hands of God ? There is not any
other Nation under Heaven at this Day,
which has more Reason to rejoyce and bless
God, for the Mercies and Blessings it has long
enjoyed by his good Providence over it, than
this of ours has. But if we come to consider,
what Returns we have made to him, for all
these Mercies and Blessings so plentifully be-
stow'd upon us, from Time to Time, by our
great Benefactor : Here, indeed, we shall find
a sad Account, such a one, as the Thought
of it may very justly cover us with Confusion,
and make us rather fear, lest God should pour
down

down his Judgments upon so ungrateful a People, than continue to us the Blessings we do already enjoy.

FOR what has been our Behaviour, under all these *Mercies* on God's Part, but continual *Provocations* on ours? When instead of that Seriousness and Zeal in Religion, which have formerly been thought almost natural to the Temper of the People of this Nation, it being so constantly found in them, we seem to have very near lost all Decency and Respect to Sacred Things, and may, I fear, compare with any of our Neighbour Nations, for *Prophaneness* and *Immorality*, for *Dissoluteness* and *Luxury*, *Pride* and *Vanity*, *Intemperance* and *Uncleanness*, *Falshood*, *Lying*, and *Perjury*, *Dissimulation* and *Ingratitude*. And what can we expect will be the Issue of these Things? May we not justly fear, that *God will be avenged on such a Nation as this*? Surely we have the greatest Reason so to do; since he is a God jealous of his Honour, and who, though he bears long with an ungrateful People, to see whether they will consider, and return, and repent; yet will he not always suffer his Goodness to be affronted, and his Patience despised, without taking Notice of it. And who shall be able to stand before him, when he is angry? How greatly then are those good Men to be esteemed and valued, who taking these Things into their serious Consideration, and dreading the Judgments of God, do their best Endeavours to discountenance and discourage

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Sinners from their evil Ways, that they may be reclaimed and amended from them, and thereby God's Anger may be turned away, *that we perish not?*

AND so I come to the Second Thing I proposed, *viz.* To hint at some of those Ways, which seem most conducive to the effecting of so good a Work.

AND here I might name several; but considering with my self, how many excellent Advices of this Kind have, in a Course of many Years, been given to those worthy Persons who form *the Societies for Reformation of Manners*, I will crave Leave only just to remind them of *Three Things*, which seem to me always proper to be observed by all those, who are engaged in a Design of this Nature; and they are These following.

First, That they be more particularly careful, to shew a *Good Example of Holiness* in their own Lives.

Secondly, That they endeavour, as much as they can, in *Charity and Prudence*, to further a vigorous Execution of the Laws, against those who are notoriously guilty of *Immorality* and *Prophaneness*.

Thirdly, That they frequently and heartily address themselves to God in *Prayer*, for his *Favour* and *Blessing* on their Endeavours.

First, They who are engaged in a *Design* of this Nature, must be more particularly careful, to shew a *good Example of Holiness* in

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in their own Lives. *Good Example* is the most easy and inoffensive Way of teaching others to be Good, and to avoid Evil. It shews Men both the Possibility and Practicableness of the Thing, and the Excellency of it, and does nothing to raise the Resentments or Passions of Men against those that act in this Manner. For every Body approves and esteems the Loveliness of a *Good Example*. There is something in it that charms Men into a liking of it, even when they do not care to be at the Pains of following it; and it raises no Envy nor Anger against it, as plain Reproofs, and even Perswasions will do sometimes, though they are administered in the most tender and obliging Manner that is possible.

THIS is the Way whereby the Son of God himself, *the Wisdom of the Father*, and the most inoffensive Person that ever was in the World, chose to recommend the Practice of Righteousness to the World, when he came into it *to destroy the Works of the Devil*. He condescended to give us, in his own Person, a bright and shining *Example*, of all the most difficult Parts of that Righteousness, which he recommended to us by his divine Precepts. By this did the Apostles of our Lord, following herein the *Example* of their great Master, convert the World to Holiness, no less than by their Preaching. Even their Miracles themselves had been fruitless and ineffectual, to all the Intents and Purposes of Conviction, had they not been at-

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tended with the most powerful *Example* in their own holy Lives, which no Malice could gainsay nor resist. And even now, they that would bring over others to Holiness and Goodness, must let the Beauty and Excellency of them appear in their own constant *Good Example*. All other Means of Amending and Reforming the World, without this attending them, will rather hinder than promote the Progress of that Excellent Work. For it is when Men let *the Light* of their own *Good Works shine before Men*, that they do most effectually recommend the Excellency of Piety and Vertue to others, and provoke them to follow them in the same. But if Men perceive them to be faulty and vicious in their own Practices, they will esteem them to be no better than *Deceivers*, who have some other *not laudable End* in their View, when they would persuade them to That, which they have no Regard to themselves: And so their whole Endeavours, though never so praise-worthy in themselves, would be lost upon them, and signify nothing.

Secondly, Another excellent Thing to be done by those who are engaged in this *Design* of discouraging Sin, and promoting Holiness in the World, is to endeavour, as much as they can *in Charity and Prudence*, to further a vigorous Execution of the Laws, against those who are notoriously guilty of *Immorality and Prophaneness*. It was an Observation long since made by the wise King *Solomon*, That *because Sentence against an*
Evil

Evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do Evil. And from a due Sense of the Truth of this Maxim, all wise States and Governments have ever thought it necessary to Enact *Penal Laws* for the Restraint of *Vice* and *Wickedness*. The depraved Nature of Man, we know, is much more apt to be led by the Impressions of Sense, than by the mature Judgment of the Understanding. When Men are made to smart severely for their Iniquities, this will have a much greater Influence upon *the Generality* of Men, to restrain them from the Commission of them, than all the wisest Precepts and Rules of Vertue, though back'd with never so fair and reasonable Perswasions, to engage them to the Practice of them. And this is a far greater *Charity* to Sinners, whatever they may think of it, when they are just under the Smart of Punishments, than to permit them to go on uncontroll'd and unpunish'd in their Sins. These only afflict their *Bodies* for a while, in Order to bring them to a Sense of their Duty, that they may repent and be saved. But constant *Impunity* would endanger the Destruction both of their *Souls* and *Bodies* for ever in Hell. And this many have ~~found~~ with Thankfulness afterwards, when they have come to consider wisely of their Present and Future Interest.

EVEN Almighty God himself, who best knows the Nature of Man, and what is most likely to prevail with him; and who can by
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no Means be imagined to have any evil Intention towards him ; even He, I say, has thought fit to threaten the severest *Punishments* to the Breaches of his Laws, to be a Terror to those that offend ; and even to inflict them in the most dismal Manner, when he has seen Occasion for it, that is, when Sinners would not be reclaimed by his gentler Methods.

AND therefore, when Wickedness is now grown so rife in the World, and Iniquity has put on *the Whore's Forehead*, and Sinners *refuse to be ashamed*, as the Prophet speaks, *Jer. iii. 3.* It is high Time for all Good Men to rise up and appear brave and resolute in the Defence of Religion and Vertue, and to lend their Help towards opposing that *Deluge of Impiety*, which appears ready to overwhelm us on every Side. And since bold, daring, and presumptuous Sinners, seem to have harden'd themselves, against all other Means of reclaiming them, They ought to use their joynt Endeavours towards enforcing the Execution of those *Wise and Good Laws*, which have ordained *suitable Punishments* for notorious Offenders, and *Stripes for the Backs of Fools*. Thus, I say, it becomes all Good Men to be active and vigorous, where the Honour of God, the Good of their Brethren's Souls, and the Welfare of the Society whereof they are Members, are so nearly concerned.

BUT then it must be owned, that this is a Duty more especially incumbent upon *Magistrates*. The same Power which has enacted
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the Penal Laws, has put into their Hands *the Execution* of them, and does strictly require it from them; they being, as the Apostle speaks, appointed both by God and Man, *Revengers to execute Wrath upon them that do Evil*. And therefore, when they are remiss and careless in this *important Part* of their Duty, they are not only false to the Trust reposed in them, but they derive the Guilt of other Mens Sins upon themselves, and moreover forfeit that *Honour* which would redound to them on several Accounts; As they would thereby show their Zeal for the Honour of God, in not suffering egregious and crying Sins, whereby the Name of God is blasphemed, to pass without some severe and exemplary *Punishment*; As they would help to humble and reclaim Offenders, who by *Impunity* are emboldned and hardned in Sin; As they would prevent many from being drawn into Sin, when they see what constant Severity of *Punishment* is impartially inflicted on others; As they would help to take away that Reproach, which would certainly lay upon any People, where the grossest Sins are frequently committed, but seldom *punished*; and lastly, As they would help to avert and keep back those *Judgments* of God, which may well be expected, where notorious Sins do not meet with *Punishments* proper for the Restraint of them.

As to be assisting to these excellent Ends, will always be a Matter of *true Honour* to those *Worthy Magistrates*, who are conscientious in the Discharge of their Duty in this
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no Means be imagined to have any evil Intention towards him ; even He, I say, has thought fit to threaten the severest *Punishments* to the Breaches of his Laws, to be a Terror to those that offend ; and even to inflict them in the most dismal Manner, when he has seen Occasion for it, that is, when Sinners would not be reclaimed by his gentler Methods.

AND therefore, when Wickedness is now grown so rife in the World, and Iniquity has put on *the Whore's Forehead*, and Sinners *refuse to be ashamed*, as the Prophet speaks, *Jer. iii. 3.* It is high Time for all Good Men to rise up and appear brave and resolute in the Defence of Religion and Vertue, and to lend their Help towards opposing that *Deluge of Impiety*, which appears ready to overwhelm us on every Side. And since bold, daring, and presumptuous Sinners, seem to have harden'd themselves, against all other Means of reclaiming them, They ought to use their joynt Endeavours towards enforcing the Execution of those *Wise and Good Laws*, which have ordained *suitable Punishments* for notorious Offenders, and *Stripes for the Backs of Fools*. Thus, I say, it becomes all Good Men to be active and vigorous, where the Honour of God, the Good of their Brethren's Souls, and the Welfare of the Society whereof they are Members, are so nearly concerned.

BUT then it must be owned, that this is a Duty more especially incumbent upon *Magistrates*. The same Power which has enacted
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the Penal Laws, has put into their Hands *the Execution* of them, and does strictly require it from them; they being, as the Apostle speaks, appointed both by God and Man, *Revengers to execute Wrath upon them that do Evil*. And therefore, when they are remiss and careless in this *important Part* of their Duty, they are not only false to the Trust reposed in them, but they derive the Guilt of other Mens Sins upon themselves, and moreover forfeit that *Honour* which would redound to them on several Accounts; As they would thereby show their Zeal for the Honour of God, in not suffering egregious and crying Sins, whereby the Name of God is blasphemed, to pass without some severe and exemplary *Punishment*; As they would help to humble and reclaim Offenders, who by *Impunity* are emboldned and hardned in Sin; As they would prevent many from being drawn into Sin, when they see what constant Severity of *Punishment* is impartially inflicted on others; As they would help to take away that Reproach, which would certainly lay upon any People, where the grossest Sins are frequently committed, but seldom *punished*; and lastly, As they would help to avert and keep back those *Judgments* of God, which may well be expected, where notorious Sins do not meet with *Punishments* proper for the Restraint of them.

As to be assisting to these excellent Ends, will always be a Matter of *true Honour* to those *Worthy Magistrates*, who are conscientious in the Discharge of their Duty in this
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Particular, and will give them a lasting Name, like unto that of *Phineas*, whose heroick Zeal in executing Judgment on two notorious Offenders, has given him a *Name better than of Sons and Daughters*, a Name that will be recorded with Honour, so long as the Word of God it self, in which it is written, shall remain: So to be deficient in this Duty, when there are so many weighty Reasons which require it of them, and so many excellent Ends to be served by it, would be a Crime, at this Time especially, when all sober Men must own there is so much Occasion for it, than which there cannot well be a greater.

IN Order to this, since this is a Work which cannot be performed by *the Magistrates* alone, it becomes them to give *all imaginable Encouragement* to those *honest and conscientious Good Men*, who, out of a due Concern for *the Honour of God*, and *the Credit of Religion* and *Vertue* in the World, are ready to expose themselves to the Malice of Wicked Men, and willing to take great Pains to search into the hidden dark Retirements of Sin, that the secret as well as the more open and barefaced Offenders may be brought forth to reap the Fruit of their Doings, in their deserved Punishments, *that others may see it and fear, and do no more so wickedly.*

Thirdly, A third Thing proper to be done by all those, who are engaged in a *Design* of this Nature, is frequently and heartily to address themselves to God in *Prayer*, for his *Favour* and *Blessing* on their Endeavours.

Two of the *Petitions* of that most admirable *Prayer*, composed by our Lord himself, and recommended by him to our daily Practice, relate to this very Thing, that *God's Name may be Hallowed*, and *his Kingdom come*, that is, may prosper and be established in the World, in Opposition to *That* of the *Prince of Darknefs*. Good Men may design well, and labour hard to produce their desired Effect, but it's *God's Blessing* alone, that can give Success to *all their Endeavours*. This the Holy *Psalmist* has sufficiently intimated to us, where he says, *Except the Lord build the House, their Labour is but lost that build it; except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain*, Psal. cxxvii. 1. Unless it pleaseth God, by his Grace, to co-operate with their Endeavours, the Work will go on but very slowly at the best, and perhaps at last come to nothing. Of him it must be devoutly and fervently ask'd by them that he would vouchsafe to open the Eyes of Sinners, and shew them *the Things belonging to their Peace, before they are hidden from them*; that he would be pleas'd to touch their Hearts with a Sense of their Folly, and of the Danger they are running into by their evil Deeds. For though *Severities* may make the Offenders smart, yet will *They* not alone change their Hearts, nor work them into a thorough Reformation. *They* may indeed help to soften their Hearts, and prepare them to receive good Instructions, and dispose them to Repentance, but then it must be *the Grace of God* which must put the

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finishing Stroke to the good Work, and entirely *turn the Hearts of the Disobedient, to the Wisdom of the Just.*

3. AND so I come to the Third and Last Thing which I proposed, to Conclude with an Exhortation.

As for you, therefore, *my Brethren*, into whose Hearts it hath pleased God to put it, to contribute your Endeavours to this excellent Work, of putting a Stop to the Growth of *Immorality* and *Prophaneness*, and to set forward a *Reformation of Manners* amongst us; Let me, in the Name of God, earnestly beseech you, not to be discouraged from proceeding therein, by whatever injurious Treatment you may meet withal for so doing. Wicked Men do not care to be disturbed in their evil Courses, and the Prince of Darkness, that great Enemy of the Happiness of Mankind, will be sure to joyn all his Power with theirs to oppose you therein. And therefore it will be no Wonder, if they raise Calumnies against you, and do maliciously insinuate to the World, that it is more from some *mercenary base Ends* of your own, that you have in your View, from a conceited busy Temper of meddling in other Peoples Matters, or from a proud Desire of being thought better than your Neighbours, than from a true Concern for the Honour of God, that you are engaged in this Undertaking. You know they have been Lyars from the Beginning. Our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles met with the same
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Treatment, when they attempted to destroy *the Works of the Devil*, by teaching the Ways of Righteousness and Salvation to Mankind. They were despitefully used, contemptuously reviled, and cruelly persecuted. But still they went on, and in spite of all Opposition, God working with them, they gained their Point, and the World was converted from Darkness and Idolatry, to Holiness and to the Worship of the true God. You are in a much better Condition than they were in this one Respect; They had the Powers of this World, who were against them, to contend with; the Chief Priests and the Rulers of the People were their bitter Enemies. Whereas you have the Countenance and Encouragement of our most excellent KING, who has frequently, since he came to the Throne of these Kingdoms, caused it to be given in Charge to those in Authority, that they should see to the Execution of the Laws against Immorality and Prophaneness; and you have the sincere Wishes of all Good Men, for the Prosperity of your righteous Undertaking. *They that are for you, are more than they that are against you.* Even the Great God, and our Blessed Saviour, those sincere Lovers of Souls, are certainly pleased in beholding your pious and charitable Endeavours, to snatch unthinking and desperate Souls from the very Brink of Destruction. And since the holy Angels do rejoyce at the Conversion of one Sinner, how much, may we imagine, must their Joy be encreased, to see great Numbers of profligate Sinners, that were

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in the high Road to Ruine, reformed and amended by your prudent Care; and by your charitable Concern for their Good and Safety, taught to be Holy and Wise and Happy? For as great as the Numbers of the Wicked and Prophane still are, it must be acknowledged to your Honour, and to that of several worthy Magistrates, that by your Vigilance and Care, and their hearty Concurrence with you in the Execution of the Laws against the Prophane and Ungodly, great Checks have been put to the Encrease of them.

NOR ought other Good Persons, that have contributed to the maintaining of the *Charity-Schools*, and the Governours of them, go without their Share of just Praise and Commendation on this Account. By the Means of which, notwithstanding all the Objections that have been made against them, either by Persons peevishly disposed to find Fault, or else being evil-affected to Religion it self, are griev'd to see it prosper and flourish in the World; I say, notwithstanding all the Objections which have been made against them, I do not doubt to affirm, that many, very many of those *fortunate* Children, who have had their Education in them, and would otherwise have been in the greatest Danger of being carried away in the common Stream of Ungodliness, to their utter Ruine, (as other poor ignorant and neglected Children I fear too frequently have been) I say, many of them are now, by their *Modesty*, *Sobriety*, and *Virtue*, and *Diligence in their Callings*, great Ornaments to Religion, to the
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Publick, and to *the Places of their Education*; and I trust will hereafter make no inconsiderable Number, in the general Assembly of the Blessed Saints above. For which Reason, I cannot but express it as my most earnest Wish, that so noble, so excellent, and so truly Christian a *Design*, may never be laid aside, so long as there are poor ignorant Creatures in the World to be taught and instructed, notwithstanding some smaller Inconveniencies that it may possibly be attended with.

WHILE I joyn with great Numbers of Good Men in your just Praises, for the many excellent Services you have done, *for the Honour of God*, and *for the Sake of declining Religion and Vertue*; Give me Leave, *my Brethren*, just to mention one *Great Scandal*, worthy of all Good Mens most serious Thoughts, and most vigorous Endeavours to remove. To which if some timely Remedy be not applied, it will go near to blast all other the most laudable Attempts, to further a Reformation among the meaner Sort of People; and that is, *the vast Numbers of Shops for the selling of spirituous Liquors*, in every Corner of the Streets, being of late Years encreased to an amazing Number. If these are permitted to go on uncontrolled, it is impossible for me to set forth to you the innumerable ill Consequences that will attend it. When instead of that *Diligence in their Callings*, that *Sobriety and Vertue*, which are yet to be found among many of them, nothing but *Drunkenness, Uncleaness, Prophaneness, Dishonesty, Cursing and Swearing, Ungovernableness*, and whatever

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ever else has an ill Name, and ought to be dreaded by a wise People, as the Bane of Religion and Good Manners, and even of Society itself, will in Time corrupt the Generality of them to such a Degree, as will make it very difficult ever to bring them to Sobriety and Temperance again, or to be so serviceable to the Publick, as they still are.

I most heartily wish, therefore, that some Cure could be found out for this great, and still growing Evil, which every Body, who thinks seriously of these Matters, cannot but be sensible of the Necessity of.

I have nothing more now to add, but to recommend you, my Brethren, and all your most excellent Designs and Undertakings to the Favour, Protection, and Blessing of Almighty God; and to pray that you, who have been the Instruments of promoting his Glory in this World, may in his good Time be made Partakers of his most gracious Promise, whereby he has assured us, that *They, who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine like the Stars for ever and ever.* Amen.

Now to God the Father, &c.

F I N I S.



The Two and Thirtieth
A C C O U N T
 O F T H E
 PROGRESS made in the
Cities of *London and Westminster,*
 And Places adjacent,
 By the *Societies* for Promoting
 a *Reformation of Manners* ;

By Furthering the Execution of the LAWS
 against Prophaneness and Immorality,
 and by other Christian Methods.

THE Reasonableness of Uniting in
 Societies, for the more effectual
 carrying on a Work of this Na-
 ture, need not be farther proved, after
 what has been said with so much Advan-
 tage upon that Subject in the Annual *Re-
 formation Sermons* ; as also by the Excellent
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Author of the *Whole Duty of Man*, who, in his Treatise of the *Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety*, hath this remarkable Passage: *The Scandal*, saith he, *brought upon Religion, as it was not contracted by the Irregularities of one or two Persons, but by associated and common Crimes; so neither will it be removed by a few single and private Reforms. There must be Combinations and publick Confederacies in Virtue, to ballance and counterpoise those of Vice, or she will never recover that Honour which she acquired by the general Piety of her Professors.*

THANKS be to GOD, many such Combinations and publick Confederacies are now in Being, who make it a great Part of their Business to oppose associated as well as particular Offenders.

THE *Societies for Reformation of Manners* are eminently of that Number: And the Usefulness of such Confederacies is visible from what has been actually brought about by means of the said Societies, far beyond what could have been hoped for from any private Endeavours. Multitudes, for more than *Thirty Years* last past, have been prosecuted, and punished according to Law, for lewd and scandalous Practices. Great Numbers of Bawdy-Houses, and other disorderly Houses, have been suppressed and shut up, and the Streets very much purged from the wretch-

wretched Tribe of *Night-walking Prostitutes*, and most *detestable Sodomites*. Many young Men, taken with lewd Women, have, by their being brought to timely Shame and Punishment, been discouraged, and turned (as we have Reason to hope) from following such sinful Courses, which often cause them to defraud their Parents, Masters, &c. and bring themselves to utter Ruin. Moreover, many Thousands of *good Books* have been dispersed by these *Societies* throughout the Kingdom, and put into the Hands of lewd and profane Persons, to awaken them to a Sense of their Sins. By these various Methods, many Persons have, by the Blessing of GOD, been brought to a Sense of their Sin and Danger; and tho' they have at first been exasperated against the Instruments of awakening them out of their dreadful Lethargy, and stopping them in their sinful Courses; yet have they afterwards blessed GOD for their Recovery, and been heartily thankful to those, who have been serviceable to them therein.

THIS Undertaking, begun by a very few Persons, has mightily spread it self, not only in *Great-Britain*, but in Foreign Parts. And the great Good which, by GOD's Blessing, has been done by the said Societies, has very much animated their Endeavours. They have likewise been encouraged by several Royal Proclamations, Orders of Sessi-

ons, Presentments of Grand-Juries in many Counties in *England*; by the Lord-Mayors and Court of Aldermen of the City of *London*; by many Sermons of the Right Reverend the Bishops, and other eminent Divines, preached to the Societies, and published throughout the Kingdom; and by the Writings of other learned Men; as also by the solemn Approbation of a considerable Number of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Honourable Judges of *England* and *Ireland*, and the Commissioners of several Protestant Churches.

It must be confessed, That Profaneness and Debauchery do very much abound, for want of a more general and hearty Concurrence in this Work of Persons of all Orders amongst us, in Proportion to the Greatness of the Concern.

THE said Societies have prosecuted, and been assisting in Prosecuting, from the *First* of *December* 1725, to the *First* of *December* 1726, divers Sorts of Offenders; viz. For *Lewd* and *Disorderly Practices*, *Keeping of Bawdy* and *Disorderly Houses*, *Exercising their Trades* or *Ordinary Callings* on the *Lord's-Day*, *Profane Swearing* and *Cursing*, *Drunkennes*, *Common Gaming*, and for *Keeping Common Gaming-Houses*,

In all — 1060.

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THE Total Number of Persons prosecuted by the Societies, in or near *London* only, for *Debauchery* and *Prophaneness*, for 35 Years last past, are calculated at about 92959.

THE said Societies have also been assistant in Prosecuting, and bringing to Punishment, several *Sodomitical Houses*, as well as divers Persons for *Sodomy*, and *Sodomitical Practices*.

IF Impiety and Debauchery had gone on spreading and increasing among us for the last *Thirty Years*, at that prodigious rate as they did for many Years before, we had assuredly been one of the most profligate Nations in the World; which must probably have reduced us to a very miserable Condition long before now; but by the Blessing of GOD upon the various Endeavours of our Religious Societies of several Sorts, a great Check hath been given to the Prevalency of the most scandalous Vices, and in many Instances, a visible Reformation has ensued.

THOSE therefore that have a just Zeal for the Honour of GOD and Religion; who desire to prevent the spreading of the Leprosy of Sin; who are unwilling to have their Children, and other Relations, or their Friends and Servants, corrupted by ill Examples and wicked Allurements: Those that
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sincerely wish well to those excellent and hopeful Nurseries of Piety and good Manners, the CHARITY-SCHOOLS; and would be heartily grieved to see the Christian Instruction and pious Education that Children receive therein, miscarry, through prevailing open Temptations to Wickedness, and a general Contempt of Religion: Those, lastly, who have any due Love to their Country, and would prevent a National Guilt, and thereby keep off National Judgments, cannot possibly, one would think, but heartily approve and assist this Useful Design for Suppressing Prophaneness and Immorality.

Now, Whereas some have most maliciously insinuated, That it is not *Reformation* which is intended, but the getting of Money from the Delinquents; and by such base and vile Reports have imposed on some very well-meaning People: It is hereby declared to the World, That such a Charge upon these Societies is absolutely false. It is allowed, that there have been some base and wicked Persons, (not engag'd, or in the least concerned in the Societies for Reformation of Manners) who have extorted Money from Offenders, and sometimes from honest Men. But all such Practices are utterly detested by these Societies, (who, it is well known, have strictly enquired after such

such Persons, and when discovered, have brought them to Punishment) nor do they know or believe, that any engaged in these Societies are chargeable therewith. And to prevent, as much as is possible, all Suspicion of a mercenary Design or Principle in any that act in the Business of *Reformation*, the GENTLEMEN concern'd have all along recommended it, and indeed insisted upon it with those of the Societies, who have given Informations against *Vice* or *Prophaneness*, that they should never receive that Part of the Penalty which the Law allows the Informer; and it has not come to their Knowledge, that any one Person of those Societies have acted otherwise. However, if at any time hereafter it should happen, that any Person or Persons, concerned in any of the Societies for promoting a *Reformation of Manners*, should be chargeable with any of the evil Practices before-mentioned, or even with taking the Reward which the Law allows them; it is humbly requested of all that are heartily concerned for the Interest of Religion, that they will give them Notice thereof.

N. B. The Persons concerned in these Societies, *confine* their Prosecutions to the Offences mention'd in this Account.

AND

AND for the further Preventing any Objections from those who are too much disposed to raise them, against this necessary Work; that there is more Regard had to the Punishment, than to the Conversion of prophane and vicious Persons; it may not be improper to acquaint the World; That in Conjunction with the other pious and proper Methods of Instruction, Admonition, and Reproof, which are used by the Societies to awaken Men to a Sense of their Sins, and Concern for their Souls, the Number of large Books, and lesser Discourses, that have been wrote by some of their own Members, or which they have procured to be wrote and published by others, and have given away at their own Charge, in this and other Kingdoms, for the Furthering of the Reformation of this, and other Nations, and the particular Conversion of such Offenders as they have brought to Punishment for their crying Enormities, are calculated at above Four Hundred and Twelve Thousand.

The Number of Books given
away by the Societies —



F I N I S.

